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MY
NEIGHBOUR'S
SHOES
BY
A·L·O·E

THE LÚCKLESS SPARROW.

Page 97

MY NEIGHBOUR'S SHOES;

OR,

FEELING FOR OTHERS.

A Tale.

BY A. L. O. E.

Authoress of "The Young Pilgrim," "The Giant-killer," "Rambles of a Rat," "Pride and his Prisoners," &c., &c.

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MY NEIGHBOUR'S SHOES.

CHAPTER I.

A HOME-SKETCH.

"IF he were not the son of my dear nephew John, I would not bear it!" said Mrs. Martha Meredith, as with a trembling hand she felt for her spectacles, which, from a little movement which she made, dropped from her lap to the floor.

"Pray don't stoop, aunt!" cried Lina, rising quickly from her low chair; and in a minute she had picked up the spectacles and given them back to the old lady.

"I am sure that I was never so shaken in my life; the boy drove as though he were wild! I wonder that a wheel did not come

off, or that he did not dash us up against a lamp-post! And there was no use in talking to Master Archie, he only laughed and drove the faster, though he must have plainly seen that his conduct really worried me!"

"And worried the pony too!" exclaimed Lina. "Poor dear little Tommy, he was never so flogged before; and Archie jagged his mouth so dreadfully—oh, he is a very, very cruel boy!"

Now, though Mrs. Martha often found fault with Archie herself, she would never let any one else do so: she said with some severity in her tone, "Archie is *not* a cruel boy, he's a very fine fellow; he is only a little thoughtless, that's all. He never meant to vex me or to hurt the pony, but he has not yet been taught to consider the feelings of others, or to put himself in their place."

"No, indeed, or he would not have dropt a pebble into the blind beggar's hat," murmured Lina, "and have laughed at the poor man's look of disappointment when he found that it was not a penny."

"That's what he would call 'a practical joke,'" said the old lady, adjusting her spectacles on her nose.

"The beggar thought it a very bad joke," observed Lina; "I felt so sorry for the poor man."

"Archie's spirits quite run away with him, my dear. I remember his good father just such a boy as he, as very a madcap as ever breathed, full of frolic and fun."

"But was it fun when Archie told that thin little boy who was gathering sticks near our hedge, that he was an idle, good-for-nothing vagabond; that he was hanging about the house to pick up anything he could lay hands on, and that if he did not move off double quick, Archie would get a policeman to take him. The little boy was doing no harm, aunt, but he looked very ragged and poor; perhaps he had a great deal of trouble to bear without hard words which he did not deserve!"

Mrs. Martha did not reply, but shook her head very gravely. Lina had resumed her employment of stitching, and she now pursued it in silence, thinking in her young mind how

much more quiet and comfortable the house was when her cousin was *not* at home for the holidays, and what a pity it was that his greatest delight seemed to be plaguing every one near him.

Presently a pretty white pussy, half way between a kitten and a cat, came noiselessly through the open door, and rubbing itself against Lina's dress seemed to ask the child's notice and kindness.

"Ah, my beauty!" exclaimed Lina, stooping down, and raising her favourite to her knee, "did you want a little play with your mistress? But mind you, my pretty Snowdrop, work must always come before play. I've to stitch all round this cuff, so you lie quiet and cosy, and when my task is done, we'll have a little game together. Would not one think that she understood me, pretty, gentle, playful little pussy!" Lina patted and fondled her cat, and then went on again with her stitching —Snowdrop lying coiled up in her lap, in quiet ease and enjoyment.

While Mrs. Martha knits and Lina stitches, we will take a little glance round the apartment, and make ourselves acquainted with

the appearance and disposition of its present inmates.

A neat, comfortable room it is, such as may be seen any day in one of the hundreds of villas in the suburbs, which stretch out to such a distance from London that we wonder as we pass along their seemingly endless line, when we shall actually leave town behind. These tidy little houses have tidy little gardens, some with a round plot, some with a square, some with no plot at all, but a gravel-walk down the middle, as was the case with Mrs. Martha's. These gardens are too small to play in, too open to the public to sit in; they are rather for ornament than use, like the parsley round a dish of mackerel. There is pleasure to a Londoner's eye in looking upon something green, even if it be only a tiny box hedge, or a rather dusty laurel.

So much for the garden; now for the room in which the ladies are sitting. It is somewhat cheaply furnished, but spotless are the muslin curtains which hang by the single window, and snow-white the tidies with which Mrs. Martha's knitting-needles have adorned

every chair. There is a very antiquated screen, quite an heir-loom, which instantly attracts the eye; it is covered all over with ancient prints, yellow in tint, and quaint in design. How every one has been studied by Lina, from that of the lady in a coal-scuttle bonnet, to the favourite picture of a run-away tiger attacking the leaders of a coach. The furniture is very precisely arranged, according to unalterable rules, the sofa on one side of the fire, the solemn arm-chair on the other; the foot-stool in the middle of the rug; a row of chairs—stiff and regular as a line of soldiers, standing with their backs against the wall. The book-case is a heavy and solemn affair, well suited for the thick, old-fashioned volumes with which it is principally filled, not one of which Lina can open without special permission from her great-aunt, although she is often employed to dust their dull leathern backs. There is one low shelf, however, which is the child's peculiar delight; there rest, gay in red, blue, and purple, the books which are quite her own, presents received at Christmas, read and re-read, and valued by the lonely little

orphan as though they were living companions.

One ornament of the apartment must be noticed, as in it Mrs. Martha has particular pride. There is in one corner of the room, a black cabinet full of old china, very curious and grotesque; funny little tea-pots, oddly shaped jars, and plates of the strangest patterns. Lina has been taught to regard this cabinet as a collection of family treasures, and knows where her great-grandfather bought such a vase, and who brought the mandarin from China. Her favourite piece is a porcelain image of Mercury, which occupies the middle place in the cabinet. Lina knows nothing about Mercury; but the wings on his feet make her always imagine that the figure represents a fairy-king, and many a fanciful tale has that pretty little image suggested.

Mrs. Martha Meredith herself is a lady who, half a century before, had some claims to the name of beauty. Lina often thinks that her great-aunt would be pretty still, if only that bent figure could be raised, that yellowish front of stiff curls replaced by

natural hair, and the innumerable lines upon cheek and brow be smoothed down by a fairy's touch. Mrs. Martha is an almost constant sufferer from rheumatism and nervous headache. She passes nearly as many days in her own chamber as in the sitting-room below; and Lina, in her care of her feeble relative, has become quite learned in matters connected with nursing, can beat up an egg, or a pillow, and make barley-water, arrow-root, or gruel better than many girls of twice her age. Mrs. Martha has never had reason to regret the day when she adopted as her own the penniless orphan of her niece.

Lina's good qualities are certainly not those that would attract at first sight. Her figure is of the dumpling make, almost as broad as it is long,—and of the plump face which surmounts it, the only charm is good-humour. Many a funny little caricature Master Archie has drawn of a visage round as a plate, with little eyes, very large mouth, and comical nose not much bigger than a button pointing upwards towards the sky. I will not say that these caricatures are very good likenesses,

or that they do not exaggerate every defect; they resemble their original just enough to make poor Lina feel vexed and hurt, and more uncomfortably shy than she would otherwise have been when in the presence of strangers. Till Archie had cut his jokes on her ugliness, the little girl had not thought much about good looks, nor regretted that she did not possess them; she knew that her dear old aunt would love her, however plain she might be, and she had not even wished to be different from what God had been pleased to make her. But Lina has now begun to think it hard that she should be more ungainly than others; she begins to long for the beauty and grace which would save her from the cruel jokes which she is not wise enough to disregard. She is uneasy whenever she sees her cousin take a pencil in his hand, and could have cried when she saw her own figure drawn in chalk on the outside of his door. It is certainly foolish in Lina to care for such things, but she is only a little girl, and of a tender spirit which is keenly alive either to kindness or unkindness. Whether it show any cleverness or sense in Archie to

rouse feelings that are evil as well as painful in the heart of his gentle cousin, merely for his own selfish amusement—whether the pleasure that he receives be worth the annoyance that he gives—I leave my young readers to decide.

CHAPTER II.

A HUNT.

"I'VE had such a jolly lark!" exclaimed Archie, bursting into the room, leaving the door open, and then throwing himself on the sofa beside Mrs. Martha with a violence which made both the couch and its occupant shake.

"Dear child, sit down a little more gently," said the old lady, "and come in a little more softly; I haven't the nerves to bear bustle or noise!"

"I'm glad I've no nerves!" laughed the boy, kicking the leg of the sofa till he drove his great-aunt into the fidgets. "I've had such fun with the sparrows! They're the only game one can find about London, unless one has the luck to fall in with a cat!"

Lina nervously covered over her favourite with her black apron, much vexed at herself for having let Snowdrop remain for one minute in a room which Archie was likely to enter.

Happily he was not looking that way, and the cat lay still, as if aware that an enemy was near.

"I'm a capital hand at shying," pursued Archie, who was working away, unconsciously perhaps, at a hole in the tidy near him, into which he had stuck his mischievous finger: "I filled my pocket with pebbles and crumbs; I strewed a feast for the sparrows on the road; they were rather shy of me at first, but presently down hopped one, and then another, till there were six or seven of the brown-coated gentry taking their breakfast at their ease. 'Now, my lads, comes the paying-time!' says I, and let fly! Sure enough I hit the biggest of them all,—the others made off in a fright, but he lay struggling on the ground with a broken leg, and I soon put an end to him."

"Oh! poor sparrow! poor sparrow!" exclaimed Lina.

"What did you kill it for?" inquired Aunt Martha.

"What did I kill it for?—for sport, to be sure; you don't suppose that I wanted to eat it!"

"I doubt whether it be right to torture or kill God's creatures only for sport."

"Well, I think sparrows are of no use on earth but to be shied at," said Archie carelessly.

"You would not think so, if you were a sparrow!" exclaimed Lina, whose disposition always led her to take the part of the weak and oppressed.

"Lina, my dear, will you shut the door," said Mrs. Martha, beginning to cough; although the season was summer, the infirmities of the old lady made her very sensitive to draughts.

Almost for the first time in her life Lina hesitated ere she obeyed. She feared that in rising she should betray the presence of Snowdrop, and as her own seat was by the window, she could not reach the door without passing rather near Archie, who was lounging still on the sofa.

"Shut the door, will you?" repeated the old lady in rather a peevish tone. It had been left open by Archie, but the boy never thought of rising to repair his little act of negligence.

Lina put down her stitching, and holding up her apron with both hands, so as both to conceal and support her pet, she moved cautiously to-

wards the door, resolving to take this opportunity of carrying off Snowdrop to a place of safety. But, wakened by the rising of her mistress from a snug nap in which she had been indulging, the cat, unconscious of danger, uttered a gentle "mi-o-u!"

"There's a cat!" exclaimed Archie, starting up in a moment, and catching sight of a long white tail hanging down from Lina's apron.

Lina saw that no resource remained but flight, and she made a dart for the door! Archie with a loud "halloo!" gave chase. The boy was far more agile than Lina, and the little girl's pet would probably have shared the fate of the unfortunate sparrow, had not Archie in his eagerness to cut off her retreat, dashed round the side of the table nearest to the fireplace, and by so doing come in contact with the curious old screen, which was happily somewhat in the way. Down went the screen with a crash; Archie's knee had gone right through the picture of the coal scuttle bonnet! Down fell Archie over it, not hurt, but delayed in pursuit! Mrs. Martha uttered a startled scream, but Lina was too much frightened, Archie too much excited to heed

THE CAT HUNT.

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it. The boy was up again in a second, and then dashed through the door, rushed up the stairs, two steps at once after the terrified child, who, burdened by her cat, was hardly able to gain her room in time, slam the door against Archie, and bolt it!

"I'm sure, I'm sure, there's no peace in the house, that boy will be the death of me!" exclaimed poor Mrs. Martha, nervously trying to pick up the stitches in her knitting which she had dropt when startled by the crash of the screen. "I don't know what I can write to my nephew John about his son, and the mail for India goes to-morrow! I must tell him that if there was ever a pickle, a noisy troublesome—"

The old lady's cogitations were interrupted by the re-appearance of Archie holding his sides and shaking with laughter.

"What capital fun!" he exclaimed; "I never in my life beheld fat Lina scud away at such a round pace! It would do her a world of good to be hunted every day in her life! I wish I hadn't knocked down that unlucky screen, I'd—"

"I wish that you had not indeed," inter-

rupted Mrs. Martha in some displeasure ; "it's a valuable old family piece, and I fear that the injury can never be repaired."

"I'm so sorry !" cried Archie, with a mock penitent air; "so sorry I smashed the coal-scuttle bonnet, instead of the cat !"

"You're a sad boy !" said Mrs. Martha, her countenance however relaxing into something like a smile. She had, as has been before mentioned, considerable indulgence for the troublesome pickle, as being the son of a favourite nephew, and moreover a nephew from whom the old lady was receiving very substantial proofs of kindness. Mrs. Martha passed over with Archie many an offence which in another would have been unpardonable.

And in truth with a little more consideration for others, and forgetfulness of self, Archie Meredith would have been a very loveable boy. Nature seemed to have formed him to please. It was not only his curly auburn locks, and bright laughing blue eyes, that made at first a pleasing impression, but a certain frankness and gaiety of manner that disposed all strangers to like him. Master Archie was perfectly aware of this, and, if the fact must be told, was not a

little vain of his appearance. He looked on himself as a privileged person who might say or do anything that he liked. He trifled with the feelings, and risked losing the affection of his relatives and friends, as much perhaps from vanity, as from any real hardness of heart. Archie would have done his great-aunt or his cousin a kindness, had it in no way interfered with his own enjoyment, but he would not give up the smallest whim to avoid causing them serious annoyance.

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERIOUS FIGURE.

LINA was disposed to be very grave, when the little party assembled for dinner, and Mrs. Martha complained of head-ache. Archie had, however, a capital appetite and unfailing spirits, and coaxed back his great-aunt into cheerfulness, by praising her pigeon-pie. Lina also, who was by no means of a sullen nature, gradually recovered from the effects of the hunt; though retaining a feeling of great uneasiness, lest at some future period poor Snowdrop should fall into the power of Archie.

After dinner Mrs. Martha, as usual, took a little nap in the great chair; and Lina felt that it was her duty to amuse their young guest, and keep him as quiet as possible.

So Lina offered to show Archie the marvels of the china-cabinet, and he having nothing better to do, and nobody but herself to tease, sauntered with her to the corner of the room.

"Now you notice that blue and white jug," began Lina, commencing methodically her business of show-woman, "that belonged to the great Admiral Rooke—"

"I shouldn't care if it had belonged to Admiral Crow!" cried Archie, with his merry laugh, "though I thought that it was only Admiral Nightingale that had had a 'jug, jug,' at all!"

"And in that plate you see a great curiosity—"

"I can't see anything in an empty plate.

"Oh! but there's a great dragon upon it, that shows—"

"That the beast originally came from China, which was doubtless the birth-place of St. George. I believe that he had his hair down his back in a pigtail, and wore a cap with a button at top."

"What nonsense you talk!" laughed Lina. "Now I'll show you which is my favourite piece in the cabinet."

"I know it, without your showing me."

"How can you tell?" asked Lina innocently.

"It's that!" said Archie, pointing to a very squat little mandarin figure; "it's an image

of your near relation; I know it by the family likeness; I should take it for your twin-brother."

Lina's face became suffused with crimson, but her tormentor went on. "Just look at the eyes—those expressive eyes—for all the world like the button-hole slits in your cuff, only cut a little askew to make them look more knowing! The nose, perhaps, a trifle too big."

"That is not my favourite," interrupted poor Lina, anxious to cut short so disagreeable a conversation; "my favourite is that pretty little fairy-king, with the curious curly wand in his hand, and the wings behind his feet."

"A fairy-king!" exclaimed Archie; "why that's Mercury, the chap for eloquence and thieving! Why any dunce would know that!"

"I know something about that figure," said Lina, "that you do not, and that would astonish you, were you to hear it!"

"Out with it then!" cried Archie; "you've astonished me enough already by not knowing Mercury from a fairy!"

"He'll always be a fairy to me," replied Lina, and then added, lowering her voice, and

trying to give an air of solemnity to her round little face;—"every night, as soon as that fairy hears the clock strike twelve, he flies down from his pedestal, passes through the key-hole of the cabinet—"

"I say!" exclaimed Archie, "what a bounce!"

"Yes," continued Lina very gravely, "and he skips thrice round and round the table before he returns to his place!"

"I shall give you back your own words," cried Archie, "and say, what nonsense you talk!"

"It's not nonsense; it's quite true," replied Lina; "you may asked Aunt Martha about it when she wakes."

"I say, Aunt Martha," began Archie in so loud a tone, notwithstanding Lina's warning "hush!" that the poor old lady awoke from her nap, and put her hand to her aching head.

"Oh, could you not have waited!" exclaimed Lina.

"I say, aunt," continued Master Archie, "is it not all nonsense that Lina has been telling me about this little image moving and flying round and round the table?"

"Whenever he hears the clock strike twelve," added Lina.

"Lina knows all about it," answered the old lady drowsily, "don't disturb me just now, my dear."

"Don't you confess that it's all nonsense?" said Archie, turning sharply towards Lina.

"No, I do not indeed," was her reply.

"Is it some puzzle?"

Lina smiled, and kept silent.

"You must tell me!" cried Archie impatiently.

"I will tell you on one condition," said Lina; "I will tell you all about my fairy if you'll promise never to hurt my poor little puss."

"I'll never promise that," replied Archie; "I mean to hunt that cat whenever I see her."

"Then—" Lina gave an expressive little movement of the head, and pressed her lips tightly together as she glanced at the figure of the fairy.

"I'll make you tell me!" cried Archie laughing, "I'll plague your life out till you do!"

Lina however showed a quiet resolution which amused, while it rather teased the schoolboy. She had got a slight hold on his curiosity,

and meant to make the most of the advantage which it gave her.

"I'll come down at twelve to-night and watch your fairy, and prove that you have been telling ridiculous tales!" At this threat Lina gave a funny little laugh, which seemed to dare Archie to do so.

When Mrs. Martha thoroughly awoke, she was eagerly questioned by the boy, but she seemed to be able to throw no light at all on the mysterious figure. She had clearly heard before of the fairy's vagaries; but they seemed to excite in her mind neither surprise nor alarm; she only said, with a quiet smile, that Lina was fond of puzzling her friends.

The servant came in with the tray, and the subject of the image was dropt. Lina made tea as usual; she cut the bread and spread it; she went to the little cup-board and brought out the jam with which Mrs. Martha treated her great-nephew. Master Archie was not idle while his cousin's back was turned; poor Lina found her own cup of tea almost as salt as if it had been made of brine, and the naughty twinkle in Archie's eye showed that he had had something to do with the making. Lina

sighed at the thought that she would have to endure his teasing for three weeks longer, and wondered how her patience would last out the terrible infliction.

"What is the matter, Lina?" asked Mrs. Martha; "I do not often hear you sigh."

"I wonder at that!" exclaimed Archie, "I'm sure that I've noticed her curious *size* ever since I have had the honour of her acquaintance."

"Archie, I wish that you had some sympathy for others," said his aunt, with a reproving shake of the head.

"Sympathy! what's that?" cried Archie, as he emptied the cream-jug into his cup.

"A disposition to put yourself into the place of others—"

"Cats and all?" interrupted Archie.

"To enter into their feelings,— to stand, as the saying goes, in their shoes."

"Well, I've often heard of *Puss in boots*, but *Puss in shoes* never till now!" exclaimed the incorrigible boy.

"I must say this for Lina," said the old lady, laying her hand kindly on the little girl's arm, "she is always ready to feel for and feel with any living creature in distress."

"Then she must always be in misery about something or another," cried Archie; "her neighbours' shoes will be sure to pinch her if she has not got a pebble in her own."

"Sympathy has its joys as well as its sorrows," replied the old lady mildly; "if we grieve with those who are distressed, we also rejoice with the happy. Then sympathy wins more grateful affection than actual benefits will secure. We are *obliged* indeed to one who does us a great service, or saves us from some serious evil, but we *love* one who enters into our griefs and our joys, and by sympathy makes them his own."

Archie began to yawn; he disliked anything approaching to a lecture, and as for this much-praised sympathy, as he had never felt, so he never desired to feel it. It might do very well, he thought, for a stupid little girl like Lina, but as for a fine dashing young fellow, such as Archie considered himself to be, he never wanted pity from any one, so why should he show it to others! He amused himself all the rest of the evening by teasing the unfortunate Lina, breaking her needle, tangling her thread, telling her horrible stories, and cutting

innumerable jokes upon her ugly figure and face. He succeeded in making her so miserable that she was ready to burst into tears, but he could not succeed in drawing from her any explanation of the feats of the fairy. Lina saw that the longer that she kept the secret, the stronger became the curiosity of Archie, and she did not despair of exacting a promise which should ensure the safety of Snowdrop in return for the key of the mystery. It was a great relief to the persecuted Lina, when bed-time at length arrived, and she saw Archie take up his candle, and go off to his own little room.

CHAPTER IV.

VERY STARTLING.

"I'D give anything to know what Lina really meant about that mysterious fairy, as she calls it,"—such were the last waking thoughts of Archie that night as he laid his curly head on the pillow. Archie was not without a touch of superstition in his nature, although he would have scorned to confess it. "I've a great mind now really to get up just before the clock strikes twelve, and go down and have a look at the fairy. But how should I ever manage to awake just at the right time? and as for lying awake for hours I could as soon hop down-stairs on my head as do that! I make one sleep of it all through the night, and am loath enough to leave my bed when the bell is ringing for breakfast. I wonder," —Archie laughed to himself at the thought,— "whether, if I had sealed up the key-hole, it would have stopped Mr. Mercury's flight!

After all, I am sure that the whole thing is only a nonsensical trick, something so simple that it ought not to puzzle a baby. I'll make Snowdrop pay for Lina's obstinacy; she shan't get off so easily again!" and in the midst of plots and plans of by no means an amiable character Master Meredith fell fast asleep.

The jumble of various ideas that had passed through his mind during the day, at night shaped themselves into a dream, and a dream so vivid and connected that no waking scene could be more so. I shall relate it as though I were describing something that actually occurred, and ask my reader to forget for a time that what follows is only a dream.

Ten—eleven—twelve! Archie counted every stroke as he stood in the darkness, with his grasp on the handle of the door which led into Mrs. Martha's sitting-room. Everything was so quiet in the house that the clock sounded unusually loud, and when it had ceased its striking, the most death-like stillness prevailed. Archie turned the handle and pushed open the door. He expected to find the room which he entered as dark as the staircase which he had left, but to his surprise

and alarm the apartment was full of a soft blue light, which seemed to stream forth from the cabinet in which Mrs. Martha's treasures were collected. Archie turned towards it and beheld before him—standing not within but outside the glass—the figure that Lina called a fairy, no longer hard cold porcelain, but instinct with life, his robes of white and gold fluttering around him, his little wings quivering in air. Archie was so much amazed that he felt unable to move or to speak, while in tones distinct and clear the beautiful fairy thus addressed him :—

"Is it thou, vain mortal, who hast despised sympathy, and made a jest of the sufferings of others? is it thou who hast exulted in the power of inflicting pain on the innocent and unresisting? Thou shalt know thyself what it is to endure, and that which sympathy never taught thee, thou shalt learn through the lessons of experience. Thou shalt stand in thy neighbour's shoes. Thy soul shall inhabit for a time the mortal frame of every creature on whom thou hast inflicted suffering on the day which has just passed from thee for ever!"

A new fear shot across the brain of Archie, it gave his tongue power to speak. Clasping his hands, he exclaimed: "O potent fairy! if my soul be thus wandering from place to place, what will become of my body? People will think it is dead and bury it, and I'll never be Archie again."

The fairy laughed, and his laughter was like music; it was echoed back from a shelf in the cabinet, where Archie saw the fat little Chinese mandarin winking his button-hole eyes, and shaking with mischievous glee.

"Fear not that Archie Meredith will lie inactive or lifeless," said the fairy; "I myself will animate his form, and exactly imitate his actions. Thou shalt see thyself from the eyes of others, thou shalt measure thyself by the opinions of others, thou shalt know Archie Meredith as others know him, without the veil of vanity or self deception to hide him."

So saying, the fairy thrice waved his caduceus* over his head. In an instant a

* That which Mercury is represented as carrying in his hand.

thick mist appeared to fill the room, cabinet —mandarin—light—everything disappeared, as if suddenly concealed by the fall of a curtain.

CHAPTER V.

A GREAT-AUNT'S SHOES.

WHEN the mist cleared off, Archie found himself still in the same apartment, seated on the sofa, with the broad light of day around him, and the figures in the cabinet, that of Mercury included, looking as much like ordinary china as the cups and plates around them.

Nothing, indeed, appeared changed; there was the old fashioned screen with the hole which Archie had knocked in it on the preceding evening. The boy was astounded, however, on glancing downwards, to see his own knees covered with the iron grey poplin which he knew so well as worn by his great-aunt; and on lifting his hand to his eyes to rub them, he was more amazed still when it came in contact with a pair of steel spectacles, which he found seated astride his nose. Archie would have laughed at so odd an oc-

currence, had not a sharp pain shot through his back, and when he attempted to rise, his joints felt so painfully stiff, that with a miserable sensation of helplessness, he sank back on the cushions again.

"What can have come over me?" thought Archie; "my bones ache as if I had been walking for twenty miles, or had been beaten until I could hardly stand." He impatiently pulled the spectacles from his eyes, but the dimness and indistinctness that came over his sight made him replace them as quickly as his trembling fingers would let him. "I can't bear this," murmured Archie; "I seem in a minute to have grown as weak as a baby." He made a desperate effort to rise, and this time succeeded, though it seemed as if the joints of his knees would scarcely support his weight. There was a long narrow mirror over the mantelpiece, and towards it Archie directed his steps—how different were they from the accustomed light bounding tread of the active young boy! Dragging one foot after the other, and leaning on the table to help himself on, Archie made his way to the mirror. He looked in, and saw the reflection

of a wrinkled old lady, in a lace cap with grey ribbons, staring wonderingly upon him through her spectacles out of the glass. Archie gave something like a laugh—so did the face in the mirror—but the mirth was more dismal than gravity, and Archie turned away his head, feeling rather disposed to cry.

"I never before knew what a painful thing it is to be old and infirm," thought Archie, as he slowly crept back to his sofa, leaning again on the table as he passed it, to steady his feeble steps; "I don't feel inclined to do anything, everything is a trouble, the very sunshine is not bright to me now, and all my appetite is gone." Again Archie sank rather than sat down on the sofa, and listlessly took up a piece of knitting which happened to lie beside him. Disinclined to write or to read, and quite unfit for active occupation, this seemed to be the only work for which his languid fingers were suited. It was but poor amusement at best, but it was to be preferred to perfect inaction, and as Archie knitted row after row, he became more composed and tranquil. He felt less of his miserable rheu-

matic achings while he sat so quiet and still, though his mind was anything but lively; all the colours in life's picture seemed to have faded at once, only a dull yellowish tint remaining.

Suddenly the door was opened with a bang which made Archie start as he had never before started in his life, for it appeared as if every fibre in his frame had received a shake which set it quivering for several minutes. Some one bounced into the apartment whose appearance was oddly familiar to Archie, though he had never seen the face but in a glass. Well he knew the glossy auburn hair which curled so prettily over the white brow, and the blue eyes that looked as if their brightness had never been dimmed by a tear. Notwithstanding his new dislike to noise, and his apprehension of some fresh shock to his nerves, Archie could not help surveying with curiosity, admiration, and pleasure, his own form as it now appeared before him, animated by the fairy.

"What a jolly young chap!" thought he, as he stretched forth to the new comer his hand—his withered trembling hand—in a

friendly manner, such as beseemed a very affectionate great-aunt.

"Why, aunt, I've seen you to-day before!" exclaimed the fairy, taking the proffered hand, nowever, and squeezing it so hard, that the rings on it almost cut into the flesh, and caused Archie to utter an exclamation of pain.

"My dear boy, you must not shake me so; I'm nervous!"

"Oh, nerves are all fancy!" cried the fairy, seating himself at the table and beginning to sing. The voice Archie easily recognised as his own; he knew well also the song that was sung; but strangely enough each loud note now appeared to knock on his ear like a hammer, and when the fairy began drumming on the table as a sort of accompaniment to the tune, Archie, had he been less feeble, would have fairly run out of the room to avoid the horrible noise.

SONG.

Old Simon the armourer works by his fire,
And weapons rare makes he;
There's lance for the knight, and there's sword for the squire,
In the days of old chivalrie.
A dainty young gallant he came up the road,
And gaily bedight was the steed he bestrode,

The plume on his helmet was fair to behold,
And the armour he wore was all covered with gold!
But ho! ho! ho!
The polish doth show
That armour it never hath proved a blow!

Fair Marjory passed on her palfrey white,
And a comely maid was she;
And blithely she smiled on the dapper young knight,
As he bowed in his courtesie.
"I'm bound to the tourney, O lady," he cried,
"I'm bound to the lists where warriors ride;
Oh, give me a glove from thy hand so fair,
Oh, give me a glove in my helmet to wear!"
But ho! ho! ho!
The maiden doth know
That helmet it never will bide a blow.

Old Simon he chuckled and laughed as he eyed
The gallant from head to heel;
"The knight who would victor at tourney ride,
Must be clad not in gold—but steel.
It is not the peacock that soars to the height,—
It is not the plumage that marks the true knight;
And ladies most honour who brings from the field—
A scar on his brow, and a dint on his shield.
For ho! ho! ho!
No folly or show
Will stand when it comes to a downright blow."

With the "*downright blow,*" down came the seeming boy's clenched fist on the table, with such force as to make everything on it rattle, and startle Archie so much that he dropt his piece of knitting on the floor. He stooped in order to pick it up, but the action gave him such a dreadful pain in his back, that he raised his feeble frame again with something approaching to a moan. It irritated him so much, however, not to be able to do so trifling

a thing, that he made a second effort; but again yielding to the power of pain, gave up the attempt in despair. Mercury Meredith—for distinction's sake I will call the fairy by that name—sat watching with provoking indifference, perhaps even secret amusement, the painful movements of the invalid; and Archie began to think, that though the face might be handsome, he did not admire its saucy expression.

"Pick up my knitting, will you?" he said sharply, angry at not having his wishes forestalled.

Meredith turned down the corners of his lips, and appeared very doubtful as to whether he should take the trouble of obeying. Suddenly, however, he arose (how poor Archie now envied his agility!), and snatched the knitting from the floor; but he did so in a manner so careless or malicious that he pulled out one of the needles, and of course dropt all the stitches that had been upon it.

Archie was exceedingly inclined to repay the service by a box on the ear, but he was now in no condition for boxing. It seemed as if he had but one thing to do, and that was

to pick up innumerable stitches; and what with aching eyes and shaking hands, he had never had a more tiresome task in his life.

Mercury Meredith began to laugh. "Down they go—down—down—down! Mind there, you've missed one; what a muddle the knitting is in! You'll never get it right while your hands go shaking like that!"

"I wonder that you are not ashamed to make a jest of the weakness of age!" exclaimed the indignant Archie. "All who don't die early must grow old, and the young and strong ought to consider how they will feel when their own turn for feebleness comes!"

"They should try to stand in their neighbour's shoes," laughed the fairy; "put themselves in their neighbour's place! Don't you, my respected great-aunt, expect to find old heads on young shoulders like mine? There's no harm in a joke, and I'll enjoy it, whoever has to pay for the fun!"

Archie began to think that the room of the lively boy was a good deal to be preferred to his company, and suggested, as the best way of getting rid of him, that in such fine bright weather he would doubtless enjoy a drive.

"I told Matthews" (a livery-man from whom Mrs. Martha occasionally hired a chaise) "to send round his carriage by twelve. I think that it must be near that hour now; just tell one what's the time by your gold repeater."

Archie clapped his hand to his side, forgetful for the moment of aches or pains, and to his delight felt, safe in its fob, the watch that had so often excited his admiration. He drew it out with pleasure and pride; if he had so oddly come in for Mrs. Martha's infirmities and plagues, here at least was a nice acquisition to throw into the opposite scale. Archie touched the spring, and listened with gratification to the faint but melodious chime of the hour.

"That's a jolly watch!" cried Mercury Meredith, almost too eager to wait till the striking was over. "I want to touch the spring and make it sound. Just give it here into my hand!"

But Archie, fresh from the experience of the injured knitting, had little inclination to trust his treasure into those mischievous fingers. It was wonderful how differently he

regarded the same article when his own, from what he had done when he had seen it another's.

"No, no," he replied, making an attempt to put the watch back into its place; "a gold repeater is no plaything for schoolboys."

"But I must and will have it; only for a minute; you're such a dear, good-natured old aunty!" and by something a little stronger than mere persuasion, Mercury Meredith twitched the watch out of Archie's hand.

"How jolly it sounds! ding! ding! ding! ding! I should like to have just such a watch as this. I wonder what makes it strike! I must have a look at the works."

"Give it back!" exclaimed Archie, angrily, stretching out his withered hand; but the fairy shrank back beyond his reach, still curiously examining the watch.

"Don't breathe on the works, or you'll spoil them!" cried Archie, with increasing uneasiness. His alarm was too soon justified. The next moment the repeater slipped out of the fairy's fingers, and Archie heard it fall plump on the floor.

"Smashed!" cried Mercury Meredith.

"I'll smash your head!" roared out Archie,

too angry to take age or rheumatism into account, as he dashed at the mischievous elf. But age and rheumatism cannot be flung aside to suit the passion of a moment; the poor trembling knees gave way, and Archie, in the form of Aunt Martha, measured his length on the floor!

CHAPTER VI.

A LITTLE GIRL'S SHOES.

A ROAR of insulting laughter fell on the ear of Archie as he tumbled, but it almost instantly died into silence. He jumped up from the floor with a good deal more ease than he had expected, wonderfully little shocked or hurt. To his surprise, he did not see the fairy wearing the shape that had once been his own.

"I think that I must have bruised my face," said Archie to himself; "for I certainly fell plump on my nose; and, now that I touch it, it feels so small, that I must have knocked it almost quite flat!" He sauntered up to the mirror to look. "I never fancied that the glass had been fixed up so high; I shall need to mount a footstool before I can see myself in it. One thing is clear," mused the boy, as he pushed a footstool to the proper position, "there's nothing cures rheumatism or

nervous headache like falling flat on the ground; it has made me feel fifty years younger. I have not an ache or a pain!"

Archie jumped on the footstool, which brought his chin on a level with the lowest part of the mirror. The moment, however, that he caught sight of his reflection, he felt a strong inclination to dash his fist against the glass.

"That's not me!" he exclaimed aloud; "that ugly, round-faced, flat-nosed little girl! O dear! O dear! what an unlucky fellow I am!" Such were Archie's first emotions on beholding his new appearance. But he was a light-spirited boy, never disposed to make the worst of his misfortunes. Some softening circumstances before long presented themselves to his mind. "Well, there's one comfort, those queer little eyes don't want spectacles! I see out of them clearly enough; and if my shape be too much like a roly-poly, I have at least the free use of my limbs. After all,"—here Archie glanced again at the glass,—"it's a good-humoured, sensible little face; it is not scraggy or mottled; matters might have been ten times worse. What folly and nonsense it

is in people to think much of mere looks! 'tis the sign of a frivolous mind. Why, there's my great-aunt; they say she was a beauty in her day; no one would even guess that now! What use has her beauty been to her? Do fine eyes see farther than little ones? No. Or pretty mouths speak better than ugly ones? No. Or dainty hands work faster than dumpy ones? No. Is not a good book a good book still, if it be in ever so plain a cover? Is not a sovereign a sovereign still, if kept in ever so ugly a purse? No one should be thought the less of for what is no fault of his own; I'd back an ugly, good-humoured face against the prettiest sour one in the world!"

O Archie, Archie! what a wondrous change it would make in the opinions of many, could they but stand for an hour, as you are doing, in the shoes of a once despised neighbour!

"One thing is evident," pursued Archie, still examining his face in the mirror, "as I can't be admired for my beauty, I must make myself liked in some other way. I'll be a jolly good-natured little soul!" As he spoke, he smiled and nodded at his reflection, which

pleasantly smiled and nodded at him again; and Archie began to think that he had made a mistake in ever considering it ugly. How much better was a little plump nose, than a great one hooked like a beak; and as for the eyes, they were very good eyes—they would be thought perfection in China!

Archie's meditations were interrupted by a burst of laughter so long and so loud, that it appeared as if he who gave it vent was in danger of being choked by his mirth. The merry face of what had been Archie popped up from behind the screen, and exclaimed, in sentences broken by peals of boisterous glee, "Oh, look at her, look at her! it's as good as a farce—as good as ten farces! ha! ha! ha! he! he! he! Pretty Lina,—most fascinating Lina, practising the graces before the glass! Let's have that killing smile again,—let's have it again; I must make it the subject of a poem!"

Archie jumped from the footstool in a towering passion, and with clenched fists approached his tormentor.

"Ha! ready for sparring, little un? Showing fight like a gamecock when you know well

LOOKING INTO THE MIRROR.

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enough that I could spin you round and round like a teetotum!"

"You'd be a coward and a bully," exclaimed the indignant Archie, "if you were to take advantage of your size to hurt or insult one who could not resist you."

"Oh, that's fine talking for babies and girls," answered Mercury Meredith; "I stand up for the rights of the stronger."

"It is ungenerous—unkind," began Archie, but he stopped, for he saw at a glance how vain would be any appeal to the feelings of the petty tyrant. He had no resource but to endure what he had been too ready to inflict; though now inclined to regard rudeness to the weak as one of the most certain marks of a mean and despicable spirit.

"Look here!" cried Mercury Meredith, holding up to view a large plate piled with tempting cherries; "aunt has just given me this to divide between us two. You shall have your share, but you are not to touch it till you've finished the cuff at which you were stitching last night; so I'll have the start of you, my beauty!" he added, putting a cherry into his mouth.

"The cuff was finished, I am sure," cried Archie, who remembered having seen Lina busy at the work.

"All but a button—one little button," and another cherry was snapped from its stalk.

"I can put on a button in a minute," cried Archie, much relieved to find that only this remained to be done; "I remember that the needle was left threaded in the work." Here was another piece of good fortune, for it would have sorely puzzled Archie to have threaded a fine sewing-needle.

"Well, stitch away while I eat away. I suspect I shall get on the quickest of the two!"

Archie darted to Lina's workbox, determined to make short work of the button. The workbox was easily opened, but not a cuff was to be seen!

"Where can she have put it!" muttered Archie to himself.

"You ought to know," said the fairy, busy at his plate of ripe fruit.

"Just wait a minute, and I'll have a search for it!" cried Archie, who was particularly partial to cherries; "it's not fair to begin till I've found it."

"Not fair! nonsense; you don't suppose that I'm going to wait for a stupid little girl!"

There was no use attempting to expostulate; the thing to be done was—to find the cuff! Archie, in a tremendous hurry, looked on the table and under the table, rushed to the sofa, pulled back the cushions, looked in likely and unlikely places—while the fairy in school-boy shape, sat eating his cherries and cracking his jokes.

"Don't hurry yourself, my dear; don't excite yourself, I entreat, or you may bring on apoplexy. You look like a little round kettle, just on the point of boiling over! Why don't you search in the cabinet, and see if your brother the mardarin isn't using the cuff as a bib? Where can the pretty dear have put her work—and what a row she'll get into with great-aunty—and—how capital cherries are, especially on a hot day like this!"

In very irritable mood Archie pursued his search, with a conviction on his mind that the mischievous fairy knew better than any one else where the lost cuff was hidden. But

what could a helpless little girl do when in the power of one whose delight was in bullying and teasing! At length, when the patience of Archie was well-nigh exhausted, he found the cuff, thrust into the old-fashioned screen through the hole which had been made the evening before, in the print of the coal-scuttle bonnet.

"Here it is!" cried Archie in triumph.

"And here's your share of the cherries!" exclaimed the fairy, launching at the head of his companion a handful of stones, which was all that remained of the fruit.

Such an intolerable insult as this was not to be borne. Archie had not changed his spirit with his shape, and he had by no means the patient temper of Lina. He dashed furiously at his oppressor, careless of the difference between them as regarded both size and strength. Mercury Meredith awaited the attack with a mocking smile, and exclaiming, "Did I not say that I could make a teetotum of you?" suited the action to the words, and spun poor Archie round and round with such force, that his fat little form was speedily landed on the floor!

CHAPTER VII.

A BLIND MAN'S SHOES.

UDDENLY most profound darkness surrounded Archie, and he felt a strong breeze stirring his hair, and blowing it across his brow; while a warm glow, as of the sun's rays, came beating down on his head. He rose slowly and stretched out his hand; it came in contact with something hard and dry, that felt like an iron paling.

"Where can I be? what can have happened? how awfully dark it is!" exclaimed Archie, with a sudden sensation of horror. "It seems from the freshness of the feeling, and the sounds—for that is certainly the roll of a carriage—it seems as though I were out in the open air! But it is darker than in a room at night when all the shutters are closed! I surely must be blindfolded." He raised his hand quickly to his face, but, alas! there was no bandage there to be removed. He

opened his eyes wide, but their light had departed!

"How horrible this is, how very horrible!" exclaimed Archie, leaning back on the palings in despair, as the reality of his great misfortune forced itself on his mind. Some passenger brushed by him at a rapid pace, not walking as people walk in darkness, and again came the rumble of a carriage, with the clatter of horses' hoofs.

"Yes, this is blindness, terrible blindness! Men are passing, and I cannot see them; the sun is shining, and I cannot behold it; brightness and beauty are around me, to gladden all eyes but mine! Where shall I turn? what shall I do? how shall I guard myself now against the commonest danger? and why should I wish to guard myself?" exclaimed the almost desperate Archie; "why should I fear being run over, or crushed, or killed? it would not be worse than having to live on in this terrible blackness; nothing could be more dreadful to me than this endless, oppressive night!"

Scarcely were the words uttered, when Archie felt his hand slightly moved, and then

first became aware that he had been grasping a string. Presently some creature rubbed itself gently against his legs, and putting down his hand Archie felt that it was licked by the tongue of a dog.

It would not be easy to describe the sensation of pleasure awakened by an incident so trifling. Archie had had little love or compassion for animals, and had only cared for them as far as they could contribute to his amusement. But here was a creature that clung to him in the hour of his sorest need; here was a faithful friend to guide him when he felt most utterly helpless! Archie's heart was softened by sorrow; other trials had made him irritable, but the overwhelming affliction of blindness humbled and subdued his proud spirit. Grateful for the affection even of a dog, Archie drew the creature towards him, patted him, fondled him, caressed him, with a tenderness new to the boy.

"Poor old fellow; he will stick by me, he'll not desert his blind master! There is something warm and kindly in the very feel of his shaggy coat. I'm glad that some

creature is left to care for me, if it be only a dog!"

As Archie was deriving what solace he could from the caresses of his four-footed friend, suddenly the animal started, and gave a short sharp yell, as if in fear or in pain.

"Who dares hurt my dog!" exclaimed Archie.

"Howling brute, I'll give him a taste of my stick!" cried a well-known voice, and the next moment there was a sound which made Archie start as if he himself had been struck, the string was twitched out of his hand, and he heard a pitiful yelping, growing fainter and fainter in the distance, as his dog fled in terror from its persecutor as fast as its legs could bear it.

"Cruel, heartless fellow," began Archie, who for once felt his sympathy strongly excited.

"Who chased the cat; who promised to hunt her whenever he saw her?" long silent conscience now exclaimed. "Where is the difference between your pet and the pet of Lina? why should one be pursued, and the

other pitied? Both are loved alike, both can suffer alike, and if fun can be found in tormenting, both alike can afford such fun!"

"Oh, bitter words, but too true!" thought Archie. "I know now the misery of wishing —but in vain—to protect an innocent creature that loves me. Oh, my blindness! my blindness! what shall I do without my dog?"

Presently the lonely and miserable Archie felt his arm gently touched by a hand. In the soft touch he fancied that he recognised that of Lina, and how welcome was the hope that he had now at his side one so sympathising and kind. How superior the little girl, with all her defects of form and feature, appeared then to the bright, handsome boy, who cared for no one but himself! The hand gently drew Archie forwards, and in the helplessness of his blindness, willing was he to yield himself to the guidance of any friend.

"Who are you, and where would you lead me?" said he, following, but very slowly, in the direction whither he was led.

"There!" cried a laughing voice, at the moment that Archie stumbled and fell into a ditch towards which the treacherous hand had drawn him. I need scarcely assure the reader that the voice was not that of Lina!

CHAPTER VIII.

A POOR BOY'S SHOES.

QUICK as the change of a kaleidescope when turned in the hand, was that which now came over Archie. He found himself not in a ditch but on the road, the hot and dusty thoroughfare along which passengers and vehicles were moving. His blindness was happily gone; he saw every object around him. There was the policeman with glazed hat, sauntering on his beat; the nursemaid pushing the perambulator; the man of business as he hurried along, jostled by the butcher boy with his tray. There was the lady entering the milliner's shop to make some necessary or unnecessary purchase. Archie knew that he was in a street very near to Mrs. Martha's abode; and he stood just opposite a pastrycook's shop, which he had several times visited with her.

Archie's present shoes, as he soon perceived,

were very bad shoes indeed; they were down at heel, and full of holes, so that his bruised and blistered feet could be seen coming through the leather. Archie's jacket matched his shoes, it was hanging in rags upon him. The poor boy, so long accustomed to be petted, indulged, and admired, now felt like a wretched outcast; he seemed to himself like a bit of sea-weed, tossed on the rough waves of life, belonging to no one, cared for by no one,—scarce thought worthy even of a look!

And Archie felt the cravings of hunger, that grievous tormentor of the poor. He had only hitherto known such hunger as would give him a keener relish for his food,—a rather pleasant sense of want, because accompanied by the conviction that it would soon be abundantly satisfied, and

> "Every want that stimulates the breast
> Becomes a source of pleasure when redrest."

His present hunger was a very different thing; and I could almost wish that every child of plenty could experience it but for *once*, that he might know, in the midst of luxuries, how to sympathize with the poor. Archie felt sick with want, oppressed with a miserable

craving for food, which made him so ravenous that he almost envied the horse that he saw standing at the corner of the street with its nose deep buried in its bag. Intuitively the boy wandered up to the pastry-cook's shop, that place which he now dared not enter. That window had always had attractions for Archie; but never had its array of cakes, iced, plummed, and ornamented; its glass jars of biscuits, sweetmeats, and preserves; its labels of "soups and ices," looked half so tempting as now. Archie felt, in his gnawing hunger, as if he could with pleasure have devoured the whole contents of the shop.

Looking in through the open door, Archie saw, seated at a small marble table in the full enjoyment of a feast, a boy with curly auburn locks and merry blue eyes. Yes, he beheld the very face that he had often seen reflected in his own glass, and on which he then had gazed with considerable satisfaction and pride. With very different emotions did Archie now watch its movements, as he stood in the shoes of a poor boy in want of a crust of bread.

"The glutton! how he clears the plate as if he had not tasted a morsel this morning;

and, I'll be bound, he has gobbled up a whole muffin and two pieces of toast besides, with eggs and a slice of bacon,—perhaps winding up the whole with a big spoonful of strawberry jam. Ugh! I wonder he is not ashamed of himself! Who is he, and of what use is he in the world, that he's to be stuffed with what would feed half-a-dozen poor hungry boys? It's a shocking mistake of his great aunt to pet and pamper him so,—it's bad for his health, and bad for his temper, and bad for her purse besides. What! he's actually calling for more cheese-cakes, and that delicious jam tart! There seems no end to his powers of eating. He sees me; I'm glad he sees me; perhaps it may come into his head that a thin starving boy may be the better for some little leavings—some crumbs from his plentiful feast. I can't imagine how he can relish anything when such a famishing face is before his eyes. There! he's going to have another ice—a pink delicious-looking ice! And yet he'll get up an appetite for dinner; he'll be ready for a steaming beaf-steak, with good sauce; or, perhaps, a jolly help of roast duck, and a huge piece of roly-poly pudding. How

selfish it is; how wicked! I wonder how any one can bear to indulge in positive over-eating, when they cannot but know that there are hundreds of half-starved creatures beside them!"

Archie had never been troubled by such wonderings when the indulgence had been his own.

"Ah! so he's done at last, the glutton! a jolly lot he'll have to pay. His great aunt must have been tipping him, and that's the way that he eats up his money. I don't see why boys who can gobble as much as they please, at least three times in the day, should throw away shillings and half-crowns upon extra grub like that. It's clear waste; it's worse than waste. I wish they'd a horrible toothache every time that they do it!"

Ah, Master Archie! Master Archie! would you yourself in that case have often been free from pain!

The gluttonous Mercury Meredith now left the confectioner's shop, looking as cheerful and contented as if he had been doing nothing outrageous. Archie, clad in his rags, happened to stand a little in his path.

"Get out of the way, you dirty beggar!" was the uncourteous exclamation which greeted Archie, and made his blood boil with passion, as the pampered child of luxury strode on, carelessly whisking his silver-topped cane.

"It was not enough to neglect me, he must insult me too. Am I not of flesh and blood as well as he? Is it any virtue of his that he was born of more wealthy parents? I don't believe that he has ever earned a shilling in his life; but many a shilling he has squandered —there's precious little merit in that. One quarter of what he has just flung away in silly selfish gluttony, would have given a hearty meal to one who is fainting with hunger. He would never have missed it,—never! and a day may come when he will wish that he had earned the grateful blessings of the poor."

It came into the mind of Archie that, though no kindness or compassion was to be expected from the proud being before him, yet that if he could but meet the eye of Lina, she would be sure to supply his wants to the utmost of her power. Archie yearned for a kind word, or a sympathising look, as well as for more solid relief; and in hopes of having all from

the little girl whom he once had despised and laughed at, Archie followed the steps of Mercury Meredith to the gate of Mrs. Martha's garden. Here the imitation Archie happened to pause, and pull his handkerchief out of his pocket; and in doing so also drew out, unwittingly, his silken purse, which fell, of course, to the ground.

Archie made a few rapid steps forward, and hastily picked up the purse which Mercury Meredith had dropt. He did so with no particular design; for needy and hungry as he might be, Archie was far too much of a gentleman to dream of taking what was not his own. He was not disposed, however, to do any kindness to one whom he regarded with dislike and resentment, and he stood for a moment undecided as to whether he should restore to its owner, or throw away the purse which he had found. That was an unfortunate delay for Archie; as Mercury Meredith turned suddenly round in the act of swinging open the gate, and beheld the seeming beggar with his own property in his grasp.

"Thief! pickpocket!" exclaimed the furious schoolboy, darting forward and seizing Archie

by the throat. Archie struggled to throw off his persecutor, and might have succeeded in doing so, had not the loud cries uttered by Mercury Meredith drawn a policeman to the spot. The miserable beggar was startled indeed when he felt a heavy grasp on his shoulder, and saw the glazed hat, blue coat, and buttons of the executor of the law.

"Take him to jail; take the fellow to jail; he picked my pocket just a minute ago."

"'Tis false!" exclaimed Archie, fiercely; "I never thought of touching your pocket. You dropt your purse, and I only picked it up when I saw it lying on the ground."

"A very likely story, isn't it?" cried the fairy, with a mocking laugh.

The loud voices attracted Mrs. Martha to the window, and Lina ran out to the garden gate.

"What has happened? what is the matter with that poor boy?" she exclaimed, half out of breath.

"The matter with the poor boy indeed! He is nothing but an arrant thief."

"'Tis false!" again cried Archie, almost choking with violent passion.

"I find the fellow with my purse in his hand, and he says that he has just picked it up from the road."

"Perhaps he says the truth," suggested Lina, looking with a pitying eye upon the wasted form of the beggar.

"Lina, you're an idiot!" cried Mercury Meredith, with a glance of ineffable contempt. "He's a pickpocket and ought to go to prison, and shall go to prison, and I hope they'll give him hard work and hard fare, and a sound flogging to boot."

"Oh, but he is so young," pleaded Lina, "and he looks so hungry and ill! Perhaps he was sorely tempted, perhaps he never offended before—perhaps—"

"Perhaps you had better hold your tongue and not talk twaddle," was Meredith's insolent rejoinder. "Policeman, just you do your duty, and take that fellow before a magistrate."

"Come, my lad, there's no use resisting," said the officer of the law, pressing heavily on Archie's shoulder; "you'd better go quietly along, and not make a row in the street."

But Archie had no idea of going quietly to

prison, unjustly accused, unmercifully judged. He clung to the palings with all his strength, determined not to be forced away without a desperate struggle.

"You would not dare to talk of sending me to jail if I were not poor—and it's no disgrace to be poor—you would not insult me unless I were ragged—and it's no crime to be ragged!" exclaimed Archie, turning a face pale with agitation towards his remorseless accuser.

"Oh, let him off—do let him off this once!" exclaimed the pleading voice of Lina.

"I'd not let him off if you were to go down on your knees to me," was the reply of Mercury Meredith. An effort was made to drag Archie from his position, he resisted with all his might; a violent struggle ensued, in the midst of which the poor boy was thrown with some force on the pavement.

As in former instances the fall to the earth served as the turn to the kaleidescope, changing in a moment the whole posture of affairs. Lina, policeman, Mercury Meredith, all disappeared from the view of Archie, and nothing remained unaltered save the house and garden gate before which he found himself still.

CHAPTER IX.

A PONY'S SHOES.

VERY odd things happen in dreams. Very strange fancies had already passed through the slumbering brain of Archie, but great was his amazement at the sudden transformation of which he was now the subject. The Indians in their ignorance believe that the souls of the dead pass into the bodies of animals; as if to realize the wild idea, the astounded Archie found himself a stout little pony, harnessed to a small open chaise.

It was a very odd sensation indeed to feel an iron bit in his mouth, and to stand upon four legs when he had been so long accustomed to two. Archie struck the ground hard with one hoof after another, in order to make quite sure that each belonged to himself. He tossed his head to feel the long mane that dangled over his neck, strange substitute for the auburn locks of which he had once been

proud. Archie knew not what to make of so extraordinary a metempsychosis; for everything that occurred in his dream appeared to him perfectly real, and nothing had been further from his expectations than to be turned into a quadruped thus.

As Archie stood lost in wonder, staring as well as blinkers would let him at the ostler who held his head, and who every now and then encouraged him by a pat which the dreamer scarcely knew whether to take as a kindness or as an insult, the door of Mrs. Martha's house opened, and a boy appeared at the entrance. Archie knew the figure well enough, but the face was turned away, as Mercury Meredith—for it was he—addressed some one within the dwelling.

"So you won't trust yourself with me again, aunty, and Lina is afraid of an upset and a smash which might squeeze her from a dumpling into a pancake. So good-bye to you both, I'll be back for dinner. I'll drive over to Barnet and see my school-fellow, Ned Tomkins."

"Barnet!" exclaimed Mrs. Martha; "why, you never will go such a distance!"

"Won't I, though," cried Mercury Meredith, as he ran down the gravel walk, "it's nothing if one keeps to a good pace; pony must bestir himself, that's all," and springing lightly into the chaise, he caught the rein from the ostler.

"He's rather short of wind, sir," said the man.

"He's a splendid little fellow," answered the young driver, giving Archie a sharp cut across the shoulder, which made him bound forward from pain.

Now Archie Meredith had no dislike for horses; on the contrary, of all races of animals he prized and praised them most. If he treated them with cruelty, it was from thoughtlessness and selfishness, never from wanton pleasure in inflicting pain upon them. Archie's fairy representative now copied his conduct exactly. It had been a delight to the boy to drive fast—very fast—to race with and pass every vehicle that happened to be going the same way, with little regard to the powers of his steed, and still less regard to its comfort. Archie had had a vague idea that if he only whipped hard enough, any horse would go fast enough, never considering that in the

poor animal's efforts to escape from the torture of the lash, he might utterly overtask his strength. Archie had often *used* the whip, he was now made to *feel* the whip, and he did not relish the infliction at all. He had at first determined that he would trot out so freely, that his driver should have no excuse for touching him once with the lash, but he soon found that his utmost efforts were not able to satisfy the wishes of an unreasonable boy. When Archie became out of breath and wearied, and tried to slacken his speed a little, a stinging pain on his shoulder, and a jag at his mouth speedily reminded him that his driver was not of the same mind as himself.

Up hill—down hill, it was all one to Mercury Meredith. He listened not to the painful panting, he looked not at the heated sides, he was enjoying the rapid exhilarating motion, and never considered that he purchased his pleasure at the price of the sufferings of his pony. Oh, how glad was Archie even of the relief of a turnpike, how thankful was he when the exhausting journey came at length to an end, as his tormentor, after lashing him

along a carriage drive, suddenly reined him up in front of the door of a pretty country house, on the London side of Barnet.

Down jumped Mercury Meredith, and after fastening the rein of his panting pony to a post, he rang the bell, and went into the house. It was a hot sultry day in summer, and Archie, exhausted by his exertions, was very thirsty as well as tired. Part of the carriage drive was shaded by beautiful trees, but just before the door of the mansion, the sunbeams fell with fierce heat, reflected back by the white glowing wall. Archie felt as if in a furnace, and longed to be able to move on but ten yards further, into the delicious shade of a beech. He heard the gurgle of water near, and would have given anything for a deep refreshing draught of the little river which flowed so temptingly by. The thirsty pony pulled hard at his rein, but in vain, he could only hurt himself by his efforts, the rein was not to be disengaged, and the post was strong as the will, and hard as the heart of Mercury Meredith.

"Here have I brought that selfish monster all this way, sparing no exertions to please

him, and now he leaves me broiling in the sun, parched with intolerable thirst, every muscle strained and aching, while he goes and amuses himself with some companion as thoughtless and heartless as himself. Does he think that ponies have no feeling—that they are to be treated as if made of insensible wood or stone? Ah, if Lina were here—blessings on her kind little heart! she would have some sympathy and pity—she would care for the miserable pony."

Thus musing in melancholy mood, and in no very amiable temper, for a whole hour stood Archie on his four feet, broiling in the intolerable heat. At last his young driver came sauntering at a leisurely pace down the door steps, accompanied by a thin sickly boy, whom Archie recognised as his school-fellow, Ned Tomkins.

"That's a nice pony of yours," he remarked to Mercury Meredith.

"He's a splendid fellow to go," cried his comrade, affectionately clapping the neck of the by no means grateful pony. "I'm sure that he brought me here at the rate of ten miles an hour."

"And it's a good long distance," observed Ned.

"Nothing to him, nothing to him!" cried Meredith.

"I wish that you had had to trot all the way," thought Archie, "you would have quickly found out that it was *something*."

"Just look at his shoulders," pursued Meredith, assuming the air of a connoisseur in horse-flesh, "did you ever see such a fine strong build? I'd wager that pony to trot against any one of his size in the kingdom!" Archie did not feel in the smallest degree flattered or pleased by the compliment paid him.

"He looks tired," observed Ned Tomkins.

"Not a whit; he's as fresh as a daisy! If you'd like a canter on him now round your field—"

"Thank you, he has no saddle," said the boy, who was not renowned for feats of horsemanship.

"What! can you not ride a pony bare-backed!" exclaimed Meredith, "it's the rarest fun in the world! just you try it for once."

Archie laid down his ears, looked snappish, and gave a defiant snort. He knew enough

of Ned Tomkins to believe that he had too much regard for his own neck to trust himself on too lively a pony.

"I'd rather not," said the boy uneasily; "he looks as if he were ready to bite."

In vain were the persuasions of Mercury Meredith, who had inherited with the figure of Archie all his powers of teasing. Tomkins declared that he was not in the least afraid, but he firmly refused to mount, and took care not to go too near either to the mouth or the heels of the pony.

"Well," cried Meredith at last, "since you have no mind for a ride, just you help me to get him out of the harness, and I'll have a gallop myself."

"You shall have a good tumble if I can give you one!" thought Archie, who was growing exceedingly savage; "if you attempt to mount me, I'll make off for the river directly, treat myself to a deep draught, and you to a jolly ducking!"

This was easier said than done. Full of his mischievous design, quadruped Archie very quietly suffered Meredith to mount him. The boy had hardly gained his seat, however, when

MERCURY MEREDITH ON THE PONY.

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the pony made a dash for the water, kicking up his heels with a sudden force which well might have flung off any but a fairy rider! There was a regular struggle between the pony and his master; but oh, the iron bit that dragged his mouth with such cruel strength, that horrid whip of which the butt-end was so unmercifully used by the rider! Archie kicked, plunged, capered, and tried to roll himself on the ground, but the fairy was more than his match! He was compelled at length to bear his conqueror round and round the field, till Meredith, with a shout of triumph, brought him back to the door, ready to drop with fatigue.

"How capitally you ride!" exclaimed Tomkins, "I wondered how you could keep your seat! That's a dreadfully vicious pony!"

"It was only his spirit," said Mercury good-humouredly; "he wants to be worked a little harder; I told you that he was as fresh as a daisy! Now you help me to get him back into the chaise, we must go the pace on our return, or I shan't be back in time for my dinner!"

Archie was so weary, and his spirit so broken,

that he made but a feeble resistance when he was backed into the shafts by Mercury, Ned Tomkins keeping a respectful distance.

"Oh, how horrible it will be to have to bear this day after day, year after year!" was the reflection of Archie; for the many changes which had taken place in his dream had never made him expect a new one, and whatever form he entered seemed for the time to be completely his own. It was, therefore, with no hope of a speedy escape from his wretched condition, that Archie, impelled by the lash, moved forward on his homeward way.

That was a terrible drive, at least to the exhausted pony. Mercury Meredith had evidently no idea of the possibility of an animal being tired. The fancy for racing was upon him; he must overtake every vehicle that he saw before him, whether drawn by one or two horses; he laughed and shouted to his pony, "touching him up" as he called it, now on the shoulder, now on the head, till at last on sharply turning the corner into the road in which stood Mrs. Martha's dwelling, the limbs of poor Archie failed him entirely, and exhausted he sank on the ground.

CHAPTER X.

POOR PUSS.

ARCHIE had undergone so many wondrous transformations in his dream, that it might seem as if nothing could ever surprise him again; and yet surprised he certainly was when he found himself seated on a rug in Mrs. Martha's sitting room, looking down upon two white little paws which seemed but a few inches below his eyes. He would have uttered an exclamation, but instead of articulate words no sound came but a dismal "*mi-o-u!*" Archie jumped up and whisked round and round; nothing could be more free than his movements, nothing more clear than the hateful fact that he had assumed the form, and must of course abide the fate of the creature which he had most despised.

Archie was a bold and spirited boy; and yet, if the truth must be told, his strongest

emotion on this trying occasion, stronger even than mortification or wonder, was that of downright fear. He had hitherto had no idea how much physical courage is sustained by *hope*, how the consciousness of having a good chance of success in a struggle animates the spirit to dare one. Archie had tried his strength again and again, and that strength had utterly failed him in his contests with the strange being that wore the form which had once been his own. What chance had a miserable cat against a strong and active boy; and what mercy could it expect from one who had shown himself destitute of pity? Archie's first impulse, on discovering his new position, was to make his escape from the place, and fly as fast and as far as he could from a dwelling in which he might, at any moment, meet the tormentor of cats. He ran round the room on his noiseless paws, seeking for some opening through which he might manage to make his exit. Alas! the window was shut, the door was closed; Archie was a prisoner in the room which the dreaded Meredith shortly might enter.

The next thought of Archie was concealment. He tried one hiding-place after another,

anxious to find some corner of safety; but deserted each spot with the conviction that Meredith's sharp quick eye would instantly discover his retreat. Archie actually trembled with terror, and felt chilly, notwithstanding the season and the warmth of his soft white coat, when he heard the voice of some one on the stairs! He crouched timidly behind the old-fashioned screen, with a faint hope that it might shield him from observation.

The door opened, and Lina and Mercury Meredith entered. Had the little girl come in last, Archie would have sprung to the door, sure that the kind-hearted child would aid his escape to the very utmost of her power. But her dangerous companion followed her steps, and closed the door behind him. Lina took her accustomed seat, and unlocking her work-box, began diligently to ply her needle. Mercury Meredith did not sit down, but to the great alarm of the hidden Archie, appeared to have a restless fit upon him. Sometimes he stood still to talk, but he more generally sauntered about with his hands in his pockets, as he pursued his conversation with Lina.

"I tell you we're the lords of the creation,"

he said, "and are perfectly free to do what we like to the brutes."

"You are the *lords*, but you surely should not be the *tyrants*," said Lina with timid hesitation. "There's a reason which comes into my mind why we should be pitiful and kind to animals."

"Let's hear your reason," said her companion, actually leaning his elbow on the screen which alone divided him from the cat.

"Were not all creatures happy once, with peace and plenty around them? There was no pain then, there was no dying, because there had been no sin. When our first father fell, he seemed to drag down all the world with him into trouble, and is it not hard that man who was the cause of innocent creatures' dying, should make their lives bitter by his cruelty, as well as short by his sin?"

"Have you any more reasons?" asked Meredith, resuming his walk up and down.

"Oh, yes," said Lina, as she paused in her work, and folded her hands, while an expression of reverence passed over her young face, "I have a better reason still. When we remember *who* made all creatures, *who* feeds and takes

care of all,—we shall scarcely dare to destroy his work for the sake of a little amusement!"

"You would have us kill nothing then," observed Meredith, "not bears, nor tigers, nor wolves. You would have us take to vegetable diet, because you think it so shockingly wicked to kill an innocent sheep."

"I never said so," replied Lina, quietly going on with her work; "some creatures are given to us for food, some we must kill lest they should kill us; but we have no right to *torture* any one or give one moment's unnecessary pain."

"I'd treat some animals well," said Meredith; "no one would show more kindness than I to noble generous creatures, such as horses and dogs—"

"Oh, keep me from such kindness!" thought Archie.

"But as for cats—the horrid brutes! I'd take every one of their nine lives! Boys are the natural enemies of cats, no one likes such creatures but old maids and silly little girls."

"Are you sure of that?" interrupted Lina; "do you not remember Whittington and his cat?"

"Whittington is all a fable," said Archie.

"Oh, no, indeed, he was a real live lord mayor."

"And had a real live cat?" inquired Mercury.

"I daresay that he had," laughed Lina, "and that he loved it as I do Snowdrop. But if you have your doubts about Whittington, you will have none about Sir Isaac Newton. He was one of the wisest and best of men,—and he, you know, had his pussy,—and—"

"Holloa!" shouted Mercury Meredith, who had just caught sight of white whiskers behind the screen.

That startling shout told the shuddering Archie that his retreat was discovered! His enemy first rushed to the door and locked it, taking out the key to prevent Lina, who had started up in alarm, from again saving her death-doomed pet! Mercury's next step was to possess himself of the poker, in spite of the tearful entreaties of the poor little girl, while Archie flew to the furthest point of the room, almost wild with terror! Then followed a cat-hunt, which appeared to afford as much exciting amusement to the one party as it did

fear and anguish to the other. Archie dashed from corner to corner,—springing over chairs,—darting under the sofa, pursued by his laughing persecutor, who dealt many a blow on mahogany and rosewood in his attempts to knock down his victim. At last the terrified Archie was driven into the recess of the window,—his pursuer was close behind him, the deadly poker in his hand! In a last wild effort to escape from destruction, the hapless cat dashed right against a pane of glass, and that with an impetus so great as at once to go crashing through it!

CHAPTER XI.

ALOFT.

DID the unfortunate Archie fall bruised and bleeding into the little garden?

No, far from it! With a delightful sense of freedom he felt himself not sinking downwards but soaring upwards; and it was not till he had attained the glorious elevation of a chimney pot, that he paused to consider by what means he had escaped the cruelty of his foe.

"No cat could have sprung thus into the air! no cat could flutter these delightful little wings which have so lightly borne me up hither! I must have turned into a bird, and that bird is certainly not an eagle; I seem shrunk into something so small, so exceedingly tiny! Shine out, sun, and let me see my shadow, though I can judge but poorly by that. I hope that I'm a goldfinch, or a robin at least; but I can't help suspecting in my heart that I'm only a brown-coated sparrow! Never

mind, I must put pride into my pocket, or more correctly—under my wing; one very great comfort is mine,—I'm out of reach of that horrid school-boy!" Archie hopped about the slates in mighty glee at the thought. "He has not wings to follow me here; I've the chimney-pots all to myself—I'm free—I'm perfectly free! Yes, the golden sunshine is upon me, and a wide prospect of house-tops before me; I'm strong of wing and light of heart, oh, life is a joyous thing!" and Archie, released from his fears, filled the air with merry twitterings!

"There's nothing so happy as a bird, be it pigeon or be it sparrow! What a fine well-fitting coat I wear, with no tailor's bill to bore me! It's so warm and yet so light, there's nothing to compare to a jacket of feathers! Do I envy you,—human grandees,—rolling down yonder in your elegant coaches? I carry with me a little portable balloon, from which there is no danger of falling. Hurrah! hurrah! for the life of freedom! Hurrah! hurrah! for the life of safety! I'm beyond the dominion of mankind, and no tyrant ever shall catch me!"

Archie fluttered down to a window-sill to

have a better view of what was passing below, taking good care that the window which he selected should not be that of Meredith's room.

"Certainly the lot of wild creatures is happier than that of the tame. It is a shame, a crying shame, that man, who was the first cause of all trouble, should make every creature that serves him wretched! Look at those poor omnibus-horses straining and tugging at their load. They don't get even the Sunday's rest which man is bound to give them. See that flock of luckless sheep driven along the road! How tired and thirsty they are, but who would think of giving them drink? When one of them stopped just now at a puddle left by the watering cart, it was hurried on by the driver's whip ere it had time to moisten its tongue! And—saddest sight of all!—there's a poor little lark in a cage hung out of yon opposite window! He who can soar far higher than I, he who loves freedom yet more than I, he must beat his useless wings helplessly against the hard bars, and sing a song of misery to please his cruel jailor! Ah, if I were king of the realm," pursued the benevolent sparrow, "I'd set at

liberty all caged birds that could make any use of freedom; I'd have troughs of water set for animals at the corner of every street, and beside them a famous sprinkling of corn for the special use of the sparrows."

The last reflection was probably occasioned by a slight sensation of hunger, which reminded Archie that even winged creatures cannot subsist upon air. The way of life upon which he had entered was altogether strange to him, and he scarcely knew how to provide for himself in this new phase of his existence. "After all," he chirped to himself, "tame animals have one advantage over wild ones, they have not to cater for their food. Man toils hard to mow the grass and raise the corn for his horses." Archie did not feel at all disposed to mingle with other sparrows; he might look like a bird, but he felt like a boy, and even doubted whether hard dry grain would be altogether to his taste, and whether he should not think it greatly improved by passing through the hands of a baker.

Archie flew again to the roof of the house, much enjoying using his wings, but with his pleasure somewhat damped by uncertainty

regarding his dinner. Nothing but uneatable soot was to be found amongst the chimneys, so Archie made off to the back of the house, where there was a little square yard into which opened a window and a door. Great was the satisfaction of Archie on perceiving that this yard was sprinkled with crumbs of bread—a tempting meal for a sparrow.

"I'll be cautious and wary," said Archie, "and make sure that Snowdrop is not lurking near, before I descend from my perch. Whether cats be enemies to boys may be questioned, but Lina herself could not deny that they are enemies to sparrows." So saying, or rather twittering, Archie surveyed the yard with his little round eye, and then fluttering down to the window-sill, peeped through the glass into what was his great aunt's larder. He saw there a dead goose hanging up by its legs, and gave a melancholy chirp, either in pity for its fate, or—what is more probable by far—in regret that a feast should be provided of which no sparrow could hope to partake.

Archie's survey was satisfactory; there was no live creature, either two-legged or four-

legged, to be seen in the larder or yard, and he felt that he might safely descend to partake of his simple dinner.

"Depend upon it those crumbs were strewn there by Lina,—dear, kind, benevolent Lina, who won't let a morsel be wasted that might do good to any living creature. I've seen her collect crumbs often, and laughed at her for doing so; but I certainly never dreamed how glad I should be to eat them!"

Down flew Archie into the yard; too soon, alas! to discover that a very different hand from Lina's had strewn those treacherous crumbs. What was the horror of the unfortunate sparrow on finding that his claws were fixed to a broken twig on which he had carelessly alighted! It had been limed on purpose to catch unwary birds. Vain were his flutterings, vain his chirpings,—the poor prisoner could not get free! His little hour of rejoicing was ended, his wings could not bear him aloft; there must he wait in misery any fate, however dreadful, to which a merciless tyrant might doom him!

"Oh, why, why should cruel boys destroy a happiness such as they could never bestow?

Why for a minute's poor diversion cut short an innocent life, or inflict on a harmless victim miseries worse than death? And yet, how dare I complain? Do I not remember the luckless sparrow that I knocked down with a stone; did I pity it when struggling in agony; did I spare it when it lay at my mercy? Can I expect compassion now, when I never showed it to others? Can I murmur if the strong should treat me as I often have treated the weak? Oh, misery, misery! if I might escape but this once—only this once; if I could be once more trusted with opportunities of serving my fellow-creatures, what a different life I would lead; how I would make it my pleasure to give pleasure, and be a blessing to all around me!"

Thus wailed the unfortunate Archie; thus in bitter self-reproach and trembling expectation he passed that terrible time. One only hope remained—Lina might come to his rescue. What would he not have given for a glimpse of the ugly little face, that to Archie would have been more welcome than the loveliest countenance on earth!

That flickering hope was soon to be ex-

tinguished. How the little heart of the sparrow palpitated as at last he saw the back door opened! With what terror he beheld a well-known face, whose smile seemed more hateful than its frown!

"Ah, ha! there's one little fellow caught; what a pity it's only a sparrow!" cried Mercury Meredith, eagerly advancing.

Archie made a last despairing effort to fly. He fluttered, he struggled, but in vain; the hand of the boy was upon him! The agony of fear was so great, the throbbing of the heart so violent, that the chain of slumber was broken, and Archie awoke from his dream.

CHAPTER XII.

WIDE AWAKE.

"OH, dear, what a night I've had of it!" exclaimed Archie as he opened his eyes, and heaved a deep sigh of relief. "What hurry, scurry, flurry, worry, enough to drive a poor fellow out of his wits! How glad—how very glad I am that I'm neither a sparrow nor a cat! I've been hunted along the road, round the room—now tumbling into a ditch, now banging through a pane, now dragged off to jail as a thief! Aunty calls sleep 'Nature's soft nurse,' but she's been a nurse to bite and scratch her unfortunate child all the night. It's enough to make one hate going to bed!"

Archie jumped up, and made at once to a small oval mirror that stood on his dressing-table.

"Ah! there's the face, the rosy, roguish face, that I hated so much in my dream. How I was sure that mischief was brewing

whenever I saw that curly poll! I begin to think that a good many people must have thought me a disagreeable fellow: I suspect Lina does, I'm sure Snowdrop does, and I could not answer now for the pony! After all, I suspect that the mischievous fairy last night was only giving me a lesson on humanity in a very inhuman way. I was forced to wear other people's shoes, all stuffed with nettles and thorns, because I would not try them on quietly, after the sympathising fashion. Well, it certainly does make one see matters in a very peculiar light. I sha'n't have the heart to quiz dear little Lina any more, or to tease my poor rheumatic old aunt!"

Lina awoke that morning with a dull and anxious mind. The day, unlike the previous one, was cloudy, and a good deal of rain had fallen in the night; the grey sky above her seemed to match the feelings of the poor little girl. She was very uneasy about Snowdrop, and could hardly think of anything but plans for protecting her pet from the cruelty of her cousin. Could Snowdrop be taken to the house of a friend, and be kept there till the

boy's wearisome holidays should be over? The scheme seemed a good one at first, but Lina remembered the inclination of cats to cling to their old habitation; Snowdrop would certainly attempt to return, and might be run over on the way. It would not be practicable to keep the cat shut up night and day in Lina's own room, Mrs. Martha would never permit it. The kitchen was hardly secure from Archie's invasion; it was a far safer place for the cat, however, than the sitting-room would be, and Sally the maid must be strictly enjoined not to let pussy visit the parlour.

"How careless I was not to warn her before," thought Lina, recalling her recent alarm; "my stupid neglect last evening nearly cost poor Snowdrop her life!"

Determined to lose no time in repairing her omission, Lina, after dressing in great haste, ran down stairs to give most particular orders to Sally. She noticed as she passed Archie's room that his door was already open, and wished that the boy would not rise so early, as he was certainly best in his sleep.

Lina found Sally busy in making prepara-

tions for breakfast. Very anxiously did she charge the maid to keep an eye upon Snowdrop, and not upon any account to suffer the cat to stray upon dangerous ground.

"I'll have a care of her, miss," said the servant, as she arranged cups and saucers on the tray; "I know Master Archie hasn't no mercy on cats, and I'd be main sorry myself if harm came to the pretty creature. Here, puss! puss! why, where can she have gone? I shouldn't wonder now if the silly thing hasn't stolen up to the parlour already."

"Oh, dear, I hope not!" exclaimed Lina in alarm, glancing anxiously round the kitchen.

"Why, you see, miss, she's used to go up, she is, and get a little milk from mistress. Sure and certain she is not here; I guess that you'll find her in the parlour."

Lina ran off in haste to bring back her wandering cat. As she approached the sitting-room, the door of which was ajar, she was startled by the sound of Archie's voice from within.

"Puss, poor little puss! what a scamper you and I had last night!"

Rather re-assured by the good humour of the tone in which the words were spoken, yet little inclined to trust her cousin, Lina entered the room. To her great surprise she saw Archie Meredith quietly seated at the window, bending down and stroking Snowdrop with quite a patronising air.

"Good morning, dear Lina," said the boy, rising with unusual politeness to greet her.

"O Archie! I am so glad to see you making friends with poor Snowdrop, instead of—"

"Instead of hunting and worrying her? I've given up that kind of sport," said Archie, "for I know the feelings of a cat."

Lina opened her little eyes to their widest extent, and looked so much amazed that Archie burst out laughing.

Neither spoke for a few minutes; and then Lina, who was fearful that her cousin under his kind manner hid some practical joke, began conversation on a different subject, while she quietly beckoned to Snowdrop to leave Archie and come to her.

"Are you going out in the pony chaise to-day?"

"Why no, I think not," said Archie, smiling at her little manœuvre; "you see, Lina, I've been considering that these drives are a great expense to aunty. She's so kind that she denies me nothing, but that is the very reason why I should spare her purse. I know so well what she feels."

"I wonder how long this most amiable mood will last?" thought the astonished Lina.

"Besides, I fancy that I gave the poor pony rather more than his fair share of work yesterday. I drove very fast, you'll remember, and he got much heated and tired. He should have a little rest to-day. I know what a pony feels!"

"Where on earth can you have got so much useful knowledge?" exclaimed the astonished Lina.

Archie's bright eyes twinkled with fun, but he would not let out his secret.

"You really deserve," said Lina, "that I should tell you all about my fairy."

"Oh, I know a great deal more than I like about that fairy already," laughed Archie. "I'd such a mind when I came down this morning to break it into a thousand pieces!"

"That would have vexed Aunt Martha very much, indeed," said Lina, gravely; "and why should you punish the fairy for a little joke of mine? What I told you last evening was only a puzzle. I said that the fairy-king would do many wonderful things when he *heard* the clock strike *twelve*, but—"

"But as he never could hear it," interrupted Archie, "we should have to wait long enough before we could see any of his curious pranks —except in a dream."

"Here comes breakfast,— and here comes aunt," said Lina.

Archie went forward to meet his aged relative, and inquired after her rheumatism as though he really cared to know whether she felt better or not. He placed her chair, put a cushion behind her, and when she dropt her spectacles, went down on the floor to search for them even before the attentive Lina.

"My dear boy, you're very kind," said the old lady, her eye moistening at even these slight marks of attention from one whom she had loaded with tokens of affection.

Lina poured the hot water into the tea-pot, and then turned to perform her usual task

of cutting the bread. Lo! and behold! the loaf was cut already, and Archie, with most unusual industry, was even proceeding to butter the slices! Nay more, to the delight of Lina, he actually carefully put aside the crumbs for the sparrows!

"How very nice he is this morning," thought Lina; "if Archie were always like this it would be quite a pleasure to have him here."

When breakfast was nearly concluded, "Lina, my child," said Mrs. Martha, "I remember that there was a good slice of cake left last night, which you will find in the little cupboard; just bring it out for Archie."

"But, aunt, I've had such a capital breakfast already that it would be downright gluttony to eat this," observed Archie, as Lina set a very tempting piece of plum-cake on the table before him.

"My dear, young folk like you can always find an appetite," replied the smiling old lady; "if you don't fancy taking it just now, wrap it up and put it in your pocket; you'll be sure to want something to eat between this time and dinner-time."

Archie cheerfully obeyed, and his great-aunt

then offered him the treat of a drive ; the boy, however, declined it, for the reasons which he had mentioned to Lina, taking care, however, not to give his generous relative the slightest hint of the first of them.

"Well, my dear, perhaps you may prefer some other little amusement," said the kind old lady, beginning to fumble in her pocket for her purse. "I know that this house must be but a dull one to a lively lad like you ; I am not what once I was, and make but a poor companion." Here Mrs. Martha, having managed to bring up her purse from the depths of her pocket, proceeded with trembling fingers to extract from it two florins, of which she made a present to Archie.

"Lina ought to have one," thought Archie, and he was about to make the suggestion aloud, when *putting himself into the little girl's shoes*, he felt that to do so might hurt her feelings, as it would seem like an insinuation that her great-aunt had shown neglect towards her. "I had better buy something for Lina myself, and say nothing about the matter now ; that's what I should like best if I were in Lina's place," thought the very considerate boy.

"I've a little job for you to do, Lina, my dear," said Mrs. Martha Meredith. "I've brought down an old print which I have been looking for up stairs, I want you to mend that screen, and have ordered some paste from the kitchen."

"They that mar ought to mend," observed Archie; "as 'twas my knee that did the mischief, I undertake the repairs of that unlucky coal-scuttle bonnet."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Lina cheerfully; "then I'll have time to finish my work; I've a good deal of darning to do."

So Mrs. Martha sat down to her desk to write her letter for India; and while Lina industriously sewed, Archie as industriously pasted, and Snowdrop sat quietly beside him, as though, notwithstanding unpleasant recollections, she now recognised him as a friend.

"Archie," said the old lady presently, looking up through her spectacles, "have you written lately to your father?"

"O no, writing is such a bore!" exclaimed the boy, who had just completed his business, and who was contemplating with pride the neat job which he had made of the antique screen.

"But it is such a pleasure to parents to hear from their absent children," said his great-aunt. "If you put yourself into your father's place—"

"Ah!" cried Archie, smiling and shaking his curly head, "'tis a serious matter this putting one's self into the place of others! I'm afraid it will oblige me to take paper and pen, and write something dutiful and affectionate, such as I should like to get from a charming young son, if I had one."

So Archie, who never willingly touched a quill, actually wrote to his father; while Mrs. Martha penned such a delightful account of "the most amiable and loveable of boys," as was wondrously different from any description that she could have given on the preceding day.

The two epistles being finished, Mrs. Martha proposed that Lina should go and buy a little ribbon to trim her cap. Archie, putting himself into Lina's shoes, considered that it would be disagreeable to a shy young girl to go shopping alone; though as Mrs. Martha kept but one maid, and was herself too feeble for walking, any little business that had to be done usually devolved upon her niece. Archie

offered to accompany Lina, and his kindness was joyfully accepted. Lina began to think that the dreadful school-boy was becoming a delightful companion, and she ran up stairs to put on her bonnet, singing blithely as a little bird! Oh, what power has every individual to give joy or sorrow to others, and how surely will each have to answer for the way in which that power has been employed!

CHAPTER XIII.

A MORNING WALK.

HE sunshine had had a struggle with the clouds that morning, but had finally come off victorious. The spaces of blue sky were growing wider and wider; the air was freshened and cooled by the rain; the very clouds seemed to laugh in light; and as Lina sallied forth with her companion, nothing but wet pavement and wetter roads remained to tell how stormy the night had been. Lina felt light-hearted and cheerful,—her little trials had passed away, Archie had not said one unkind word, nor done one provoking act that morning.

"Lina," said the boy as they walked on together, "shall I tell you what I'm going to do with one of my florins?"

"Yes, if you please," she replied.

"Well, I'm going to buy a silver thimble for you, for I'm sure that you'll wear out yours

in no time with that everlasting stitching; and I'll get you"—his dream was full in Archie's mind as he spoke—"I'll get you a plateful of fine ripe cherries, and you sha'n't give one of them away, but eat up every cherry yourself."

"Oh, you are extremely kind!" exclaimed Lina; "but you would not have me so selfish! I should not enjoy the cherries half so much if I might not share them with you."

The boy laughed to himself at the recollection of his dream as he said, "It would serve Master Archie right if this time he had nothing of the cherries but the stones."

Turning the corner of the road, the young people now entered a street in which there were various shops. The first person whom they saw there was the poor thin boy, whose worn-out shoes Archie had found so very uncomfortable in his dream.

For a moment Lina regretted that Archie was beside her, for she remembered how roughly he had spoken to the poor lad on the preceding day, and she feared a repetition of the rudeness. Besides, Lina had intended, should she ever see that poor beggar again, to speak to him of a neighbouring Ragged School, in

which destitute lads were taught. Of course the shy little girl could not venture to do so in the presence of one so much given to jesting and jeering as Archie had hitherto been.

"I must hope to have some other opportunity," thought Lina; "but yet I'm sorry to miss this one, for I may never meet that poor lad again."

"I wish that we could do something for that boy," said Archie; "a miserable life he leads. 'Tis a horrid thing to be hungry. I wonder if he has no way of earning his bread?"

Had Lina not been in a street, she would have given a skip of delight on hearing such words from her companion. She was still more pleased when Archie addressed the youth in a tone that was almost kind.

"Have you no friends—no home?"

The lad shook his head sadly in reply.

"Could you not take a broom and sweep a crossing? Look what a river of mud we must wade through to get to the other side of the road. Why not earn a few pence by honest work, instead of by begging?"

"I ha'n't got no broom," said the ragged lad.

Lina timidly touched the arm of Archie. "Would you—could you—"

"What?" asked her comrade, as she paused.

"Spend that florin on a broom for the boy, that you so kindly intended for me. I should be so glad—so very glad. My thimble is still very good, and I don't need the cherries at all."

Archie smiled a good-humoured smile. "You're putting yourself into the lad's shoes, I think, Lina. I suppose that I must let you have it your own way."

"There's a brush-shop on the opposite side," suggested Lina, "just next door to the confectioner's."

Ah! how vividly did the sight of that confectioner's window bring back his dream to the mind of Archie!

"If I were to buy you a broom, would you use it?" said he to the ragged lad.

"That I would, sir!" was the eager reply.

"Well, then, we'll cross over as best we may. Mind, when we come back I expect to find a crossing here swept as clean as a lady's parlour."

Archie and Lina picked their way over the muddy road; and while the former entered

the brush-shop to select a suitable broom, little Lina, standing just within the door, asked a few questions of her ragged *protegé*, who was humbly waiting outside.

She found the lad to be in utter ignorance of all that even the poorest should know. Without father or mother or friend, no one had ever instructed him, or taught him the blessed truths which can brighten misery here with the hope of happiness hereafter. Lina directed him to the Ragged School, where every evening the destitute lad could receive instruction, and made him promise to go there as soon as the sun should have set.

"Here's a jolly broom!" said Archie, plunging his hand into his pocket to bring out one of his florins.

The hand soon found the florin, but in fumbling for it had come in contact with something bigger and softer. Archie looked at the pale, thin lad, whose hollow eyes, even while Lina was speaking, wandered to the tempting window of the shop which stood so near.

"I say, you're hungry, my boy!" cried Archie. "Here's your broom, and here's some-

thing else;" and he held out his own slice of cake.

"Oh, wasn't he surprised and delighted!" exclaimed Lina, as the two walked away from the door of the shop, leaving the ragged lad to enjoy his unexpected feast.

"Ay, ay," laughed Archie; "he was better pleased with the cake than he was with the broom. That's natural enough, for he was famished, and he could eat the one thing and not the other. I know precious well how he feels!"

"Do you know how I feel too?" asked Lina, playfully, for she was now quite at her ease.

"Well, not exactly, perhaps."

"I feel very exceedingly obliged to somebody, and I think somebody very kind and very good."

"And you thought that same somebody very unkind and very bad yesterday evening?"

"Well—why—"

"And you disliked the very sight of his face—you hated the very sound of his voice! I know perfectly well what you felt."

"How do you know?" asked Lina curiously.

"Haven't I been standing in your shoes,

and looking at myself through your eyes, and finding out myself to be a far more disagreeable fellow than I'd ever had a notion of before! Ah!" cried Archie, interrupting himself, "there's that unfortunate blind man, carrying night and darkness with him wherever he goes! I'm glad that his good old dog is beside him! He really must have a shilling. Lina, do you happen to be able to give me change for a florin?"

"Yes, from the money for the ribbon," said Lina, instantly opening her bag.

"Stop, Lina, don't trouble yourself; I shall require no change," cried Archie. And seeing that she looked disappointed, he added, "The pebble that I threw into that blind man's hat rather rests on my conscience; so he shall have one shilling because he is blind, and the other to make up for my rudeness."

"Bless you!" said the sightless beggar, as the coin dropped into his hat.

"I've taken him in again—isn't it shocking?" cried Archie merrily to Lina, as they pursued their way. "Depend on't he took the florin for a penny; but this time he'll bear the disappointment!"

"And have no objection for once to a practical joke," laughed Lina.

Very pleasant was their morning walk both to Archie and to Lina. As it will not interest the reader to follow them through their shopping, I will give no further particulars, beyond mentioning that they found on their way back their *protegé* working vigorously at his crossing, and saw a look of grateful joy on the poor youth's face, which repaid Archie well for his florin.

CHAPTER XIV.

EXPLANATION.

UCH did Lina marvel at the sudden and delightful change that had taken place in the school-boy; but she scarcely knew how to ask for a reason for the sudden alteration in his manners and behaviour. When she once threw out a hint on the subject, Archie turned off the question by asking her something incomprehensible as to how it could be that every one's shoes fitted her exactly, and why she did not keep to her own. Lina looked down shyly at her dumpy little feet, and wondered what her cousin could mean.

Dinner-time arrived, and Archie and Lina sat down with good appetites to their meal. Mrs. Martha, who during the holidays indulged in luxuries never dreamed of at any other time, had prepared a grand feast on this day. A savoury perfume pervaded the house; and

when the cover of the large dish was removed, a roast goose appeared on the table.

"Why!" exclaimed Archie, for a moment off his guard, "this must be the identical goose that I saw hanging up when I was a sparrow!"

"When you were a-what?" exclaimed Mrs. Martha and Lina both in a breath.

"Oh, nothing," replied Archie, with a little laugh; "it was only a comical dream that I had last night. It all came of your talking so much of that malicious fairy, Lina, and aunty's lecture to me about standing in other people's shoes. I'd so many to try on last night that I'd greatly prefer going bare-foot."

The curiosity of the ladies was fairly aroused, and all the more so as they could not help thinking that Archie's singular kindness and consideration must be somehow connected with his dream. Lina begged and entreated him to tell it, and grew more urgent as he grew more obdurate. The school-boy appeared to be once more possessed by a spirit of teasing, and played with the curiosity of his little companion in rather a merciless manner.

"Remember, Miss Lina," he cried, "how closely you kept your secret; how tightly you

shut your lips; how you worried me with your fairy to such an extent that I actually meditated leaving my warm bed at twelve o'clock at night!"

"Ah! but I had a reason for my silence," said Lina.

"So perhaps have I," observed Archie, as he extended his plate for a help of apple-sauce for his goose.

Archie was, however, not quite inexorable. He held out against all persuasions during the first course of dinner, but began to relent at the second; and finally, when the meal was concluded by a large dish of excellent cherries, Archie yielded to Lina's entreaties, and consented to relate his strange dream to her and his aunt.

It was in the quiet hour of twilight, when it had become too dark for reading, and was yet too light to make candles desirable, that Archie fulfilled his promise; it was fairy-time, he observed, and his adventures would be far more thrilling than if told by the full glare of day. Mrs. Martha resumed her seat on the sofa, and took up her knitting, her practised fingers needing no light for that. Lina sat

with Snowdrop on her knee, a most attentive listener, while Archie related his interview with the mischievous fairy-king, and recounted to his little audience the wonderful consequences that followed it.

It amused the boy exceedingly to see Mrs. Martha start and lift up her hands when she heard of the smash of her gold repeater, and Lina's look of extreme diversion when he described his own feelings on beholding her face reflected in the mirror. At various points in the story Archie had to stop to give way to the explosions of mirth caused by the funny situations in which he had been placed in his dream. The struggle between the pony and his rider, which Archie told with a good deal of snorting and kicking, to make the description more vivid, greatly tickled the fancy of the child; but the idea of her cousin in the shape of a cat, giving out a melancholy "*miou*," quite overcame Lina's self-possession, and she burst into fits of laughter till the tears ran down her cheeks.

Archie ended his story at last with the misfortunes of the philanthropic sparrow, which excited more mirth than compassion.

"What a capital dream!" exclaimed Lina, after laughing till she could laugh no more.

"I wish that you had had it instead of me," observed Archie; "you would not have thought it quite so amusing."

"Perhaps Lina less needed the lesson," quietly observed Mrs. Martha.

"Ah! that's it," said Archie, leaning back on his chair, while a more thoughtful expression came over his cheerful young face. "I see that my dream was a kind of lecture, with illustrations, to teach me what I had never learned before—how to think for and feel for my neighbours. I really think that it will help me to be a somewhat different boy in the future from what I have been in the past. I was counting over to myself to-day how many people there are to whom I should act differently if I put myself into their shoes. There is"—here Archie began counting on his fingers—"the poor little French master at school, whom we all so delight in plaguing; I should not laugh at him and worry him so, if I put myself for a moment in his place. There's John Thomson, my great lumbering school-fellow, so stupid, though so willing to learn,—I ought

to consider how I should feel if I were turned into a blockhead. There's Will Jackson; but I need not go through the list, the same rule will serve for them all. I must begin to practise *sympathy*, because it is better to be loved than to be hated, better to be welcomed than to be dreaded, better to be thought a kind and pleasant companion than to be considered a torment and a plague."

"There's another reason for practising sympathy," said Lina, with a beaming smile on her plain little face, which made it seem almost pretty. "It is such a pleasure to give pleasure,—it makes the heart feel so joyous. I am sure that you proved that to-day, dear Archie, when you saw how happy you had made that poor hungry boy; you will lie down to rest more cheerfully to-night when you remember the comforts which your kindness will have procured for the blind old beggar!"

"And there is yet a stronger reason for showing sympathy," said Mrs. Martha, laying her hand gently upon that of Archie, with the tender manner of a mother giving counsel to a cherished son. "Sympathy is not only a

pleasure, but a duty, which is binding upon every Christian. Sweet is the commandment which we have received: *Bear one another's burdens,—Be kindly affectioned one to another, —Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.* Obedience to the golden law, *Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you,* would make earth appear almost like heaven! And let none forget the words which contain both a warning and a promise, *With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again!*"